(c) whether Government have ordered any enquiry into the fire in the Central Ordnance Depots; and

(d) if so, what is the outcome of the said inquiry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (d) The causes of fire, extent and value of loss etc., will be known after the Staff Court of Inquiry ordered for the purpose has completed its work and submitted its report. The Inquiry is likely to be completed during this month and the submission of its report is expected thereafter.

However, as per the preliminary investigation, approximately 2000 tonnes of ammunition are reported to have been lost. The value of ammunition has been provisionally estimated to be Rs. 19 crore.

Vacant posts in the department of Ocean Development

1032. DR. MOHD. HASHIM KIDWAI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of posts lying vacant in the Department of Ocean Development during the period from 1984-85 to 1987-88;

(b) what are the reasons for the delay in filling up these vacancies;

(c) by when these posts are likely to be filled up; and

(d) details of remedial measures taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT, ATOMIC ENERGY, ELECTRONICS AND SPACE (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a)

Year	No. of sanctione posts existing	No. of posts lying vacant out of Col. (2) as on 31-3-1988
1984-85	14	2
1985-86	No change	No change
1986-87	18 (including the old posts)	6 (including 2 old vacant posts)
1987-88	No change	No change

(b) and (c) As per recruitment rules, efforts have been made to fill up the vacanies in time. When suitable candidates were not available by transfer on deputation, the method of direct recruitment was resorted to and this process took long time. In several cases, persons even after selection have not joined ultimately despite reminders. In some cases the Union Public Service Commission did not get suitable candidates. It is, however, difficult to state definitely by which time the posts lying vacant now will be filled up becaus even after a person is selected, h may not join immediately or at all.

(d) Does not arise.

SC and ST Judges in the High Courts

1033. DR. MOHD. HASHIM KIDWAI: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of Judges of High Courts in the country; State-wise till March 31, 1988;

(b) the number of Judges of High Courts belonging to Scheduled Castes and minorities till March 31, 1988 and

(c) the total number of vacancies of Judges of High Courts till March 31, 1988 and by when these vacancies are likely to be filled up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI HANS RAJ BHARDWAJ): (a) and (c) A statement showing the sanctioned strength, actual strength and vacncies of Judges in High Courts as on 31.3.88 is attached [*See* Appendix CXLVI, Annexure No. 40.] Selection of Judges involves deliberation in consultation with the concerned constitutional authorities and is a continuous process. Government makes all possible efforts to ensure that vacancies of Judges are filled in expeditiously. It is not possible to indicate any definite time by which these vacancies will be filled.

(b) Information regarding caste or community is not asked for at the time of making appointments. However, according to the information received from Registries of High Courts, as on 1.11.87, there were 6 Judges belonging to scheduled castes and as on 1.11.86, there were 34 Judges belonging to minorities in various High Courts of the country.

1034. [*Transferred to the 10th May*, 1988.]

Fire in Ordinance Depot at Jabalpur

1035. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO:

SHRI D. B. CHANDRE GOWDA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that very recently Artillery ammunition worth several crores of rupees was destroyed in a fire which broke out in the three magazines of the Central Ordnance Depot at Khamaria near Jabalpur;

(b) if so, what did the investigations in this regard reveal about the cause of the fire;

(c) what are the estimated losses in the fire that broke out;

(d) to what extent did the fire accident cause damage to the underground Air-conditioned platform magazine; and

(e) what steps Government propose to take to prevent such accidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) and (c) The loss of ammunition due to fire in two Magazines of COD, Jabalpur has been provisionally estimated at Rs. 19 crores.

(b) The Staff Court of Inquiry ordered for the purpose is in progress.

(d) This will be known only after the Staff Court of Inquiry has submitted its report.

(e) Instructions have been issued to intensify vigilance and for enhancing fire fighting capabilities.

Delay in Appointing Chief Executives of Public Sector Undertaking

1036. SHRI AJIT P. K. JOGI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that 23 public sector undertakings are without full time Chairmen and or managing directors as on 30th April, 1988;